

SAVING MR. BANKS

By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



Saving Mr. Banks is a lovely and very sentimental story about how the musical *Mary Poppins* came to be made by Walt Disney. Tom Hanks again demonstrates his ability to capture a larger than life figure and presents Walt as a kind but shrewd businessman. Emma Thompson is magnificent as Mrs. P.L. Travers, a victim of her troubled past whose stuffy attitude and insistence on titles provides a comic relief to a serious subject.

The movie elegantly weaves the story of Mrs. Travers' childhood in Australia and the challenges she faced growing up there. Colin Farrell is wonderfully tender, tragic and flawed as the father who loves his family but just can't seem to conform to the expectations of society or overcome his afflictions. The impact of this is seen in every action Travers brings in her Mary Poppins-style satchel as she prepares to see her beloved character; Mary Poppins come to life on the big screen.

Saving Mr. Banks benefits not only from the great talent of the actors, but from the timeless mystique that Walt Disney generates. For those of us who grew up waiting for Walt to introduce us to his wonderful world every Sunday night at 7, this movie takes us back to those golden era days when the family gathered around to see what sort of family entertainment was created just for us. Walt Disney was the kindly grandfather to a generation of kids whose family might have been lacking in that department. This chance to get to know the real Walt a little better is a sweet gift that goes down like a spoonful of sugar. *Saving Mr. Banks* is medicine for the soul. Even if you are young, or just young at heart, this movie will leave you feeling good like you had a visit with an old friend.

How we deal with our childhoods is as unique as we are. Walt Disney transformed his world into the happiest place on earth. A noble goal, but not so realistic, and that is what makes us appreciate the fantasy lands that Disney created. His world is a way to escape whatever you need to forget even for a few hours. In a world filled with suffering, his lands are like a little heaven for sad or lonely souls, and a great treat for those blessed with happy childhoods.

Saving Mr. Banks reminds us of those days gone by and also of how important it is to make peace with the past no matter how difficult that might be. It reminds us that our families are people – not movie characters – and by reconstructing the past, we can heal ourselves. Most people do have a Mr. Banks to contend with, how we choose to save him is up to us. This Mr. Banks deserves an honored spot in the Disney classics vault along with all the others. Thank you, Mr. Disney, for making wishes and dreams come true for generations past, present and future.

I give *Saving Mr. Banks* five stars to wish upon.

